DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 094 JC 840 117

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TITLE Effects of Probation Policy on Student Retention at Shasta College: A Study in a Rural Northern California Community College.
INSTITUTION Shasta Coll., Redding, Calif.
PUB DATE Oct 82
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Statistical Data (110)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Probation; *Academic Standards; Community Colleges; Educational Change; *Enrollment Influences; *Student Attrition; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students; Withdrawal (Education)

ABSTRACT

Designed to survey the effects of the current probation policy at Shasta College, this report estimates the student loss attributable to the policy and discusses means of identifying potential probationary students. After introducing the probation policy, which requires at least a 2.0 grade point average to avoid academic probation and the completion of at least 60% of the courses attempted to avoid progress probation, the report discusses the effects of the policy on one group of students placed on probation due to their performance in fall 1981 (F81) and another group placed on probation on the basis of their fall 1981 and spring 1982 performance (S82). The following sections consider the loss of students attributable to the policy and the major characteristics of probationary students, indicating that: (1) only 45% of the F81 group on progress probation returned in the spring 1982, while 58% of the S82 group returned in fall 1982; (2) approximately 80 of the 382 students on progress probation in the F81 group and 47 of the 474 students on progress probation in the S82 group were discouraged from returning because they were placed on probation; (3) the two best identifiers of potential probationary students were attendance at college for personal interest and absence of a clear objective in attending college. Based on study findings, it was recommended that a probation prevention plan be instituted and that progress probation be enforced with a 50% success ratio. (HB)

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ED241094

EFFECTS OF PROBATION POLICY ON STUDENT RETENTION AT SHASTA COLLEGE

A Study in a
Rural Northern California Community College

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OCTOBER 1982

JC 840 117

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EFFECTS OF PROBATION POLICY ON STUDENT RETENTION AT SHASTA COLLEGE

Abstract

This paper was prepared as a memorandum to the Shasta College Scholastic Standards Committee in October, 1982. Data were developed to (1) provide a survey of the effects of a newly-implemented probation policy, (2) estimate the student loss attributable to the policy, and (3) create a basis for identifying potential probation students.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to Fall 1981, the Shasta College Probation Policy was limited. A student attempting 12 or more units per semester with attaining a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better was placed on Academic Probation. In order to remove the probationary status, a GPA of 2.0 or better was required in the student's succeeding semester of attendance. In addition, students transferring into Shasta College with a GPA of less than 2.0 were placed on Academic Probation and required to achieve a 2.0 GPA during their initial semester of attendance in order to remove the status.

For the 81-82 academic year, a new probation policy was implemented, instituting two categories of probation, Academic and Progress Probation.

Academic Probation is still enforced if a student with at least 12 semester units falls below a 2.0 GPA. Progress Probation is enforced if a student with at least 12 semester units shows a ratio between units with 'W', 'I', and 'NC' and semester units enrolled of over 40%. Removal from probationary status requires a reversal of these conditions.

This paper was prepared as a memorandum to the Shasta College Scholastic Standards Committee. The data were developed to provide a survey of the effects of the new probation policy, to estimate the student loss attributable to the policy, and to create a basis for identifying potential probation student.

As a result of this study, as well as protracted discussion with the Scholastic Standards Committee, it was recommended to the Board in 1982-83 that Progress Probation be enforced with a 50% ratio rather than 40%. This was ratified and implemented for the 83-84 academic year.

SHASTA COLLEGE 28 October 1982

MEMORANDUM

TO: Scholastic Standards Committee

FROM: Philip Gash
Instructional Research Committee

RE Probation Policy

The purpose of this memorandum is to (1) survey the effects of the present probation policy which has been in effect two semesters; (2) estimate the student loss attributable to the policy, and (3) discuss some identifiers for potential probation students.

1. Effects of the Probation Policy

Appendix II delineates a statistical summary of the two groups of students placed on probation last year. Here we discuss only some basic trends. Of those two groups, the F81 group refers to students placed on probation status in spring 82, due to their fall 81 performance. The S82 group are those students placed on probation status in fall 82 due to their net performance fall 81 and spring 82.

a. F81 Group

First, 86% of the F81 group on academic probation registered for spring classes. This retention is well above the fall-to-spring retention for day-only and day-evening students, which is 66% (see Appendix I). However, whatever the reason, their best hopes and expectations fade quickly, since only 41% are still attending after the second spring census. At the end of the spring semester, 13% had made it off probation and 28% continued on probation for fall 82.

In the F81 group, only 45% on progress probation returned spring 82. This retention rate of 45% is considerably below the normal 66% retention for fall-to-spring students. After second census, only 27% were still attending classes and at the end of the semester, 18% were off probation, while 9% continued on probation for fall 82.

b. S82 Group

In the S82 group, 58% of those on academic probation returned this fall. The return rate compares favorable with the 50% retention for day-only and day-evening students from spring 82 to fall 82.

b. S82 Group Continued

Of those on progress probation, 40% returned for fall registration, which is below the aforementioned 50% retention.

2. Student Loss

The assumption here is the student loss is due to those students who account for the deviation of the retentions from the retention of the population of all day-only and day-evening students.

a. F81 Group

Academic Probation - The student loss here is a wash. More than 66% of those expected did register, but only about half of those completed the semester.

Progress Probation - The difference between the expected retention-66% and the actual retention-45% is 21%. Since there were 382 students on probation, the loss amounts to 80 students (.21 x 382 = 80). Assuming each student takes 12 hours census classes in the spring, the ADA loss is 29 or about $52,000 (12 x 80 x .911/30 = 29 ADA, 29 x 1800 = $52,000).

b. S82 Group

Academic Probation - The student loss here is expected to be a wash, since last semester's pattern appears to be repeating itself; the actual retention of 58% is above the expected 50% spring-to-fall retention.

Progress Probation - The student loss here is about 47. The expected retention is 50%. The actual retention is 40%. The 10% difference amounts to 47 students (.10 x 474 = 47). The fiscal loss, assuming the students take 12 hours of census classes, is about 17 ADA or $30,000 (47 x 12 x .911/30 = 17 ADA 17 x 1800 = $30,000).

It is concluded on the basis of retentions that about 80 students in the F81 group and 47 students in the S82 group were discouraged from attending classes the following semester because they were placed on progress probation. The estimated fiscal loss to the district for the 81/82 school year is about 46 ADA or $82,000.

These figures are very minimum estimates, in large part because the retention figures used for comparison included all day and day-evening students, whereas the retention figures which should be used are those for day and day-evening students taking 12 or more units. It is expected that the preferred retentions would be much greater than the ones used, because of the anticipated high turnover of students taking only a small number of units. Also, it should be kept in mind that only about half the total number of day-only and day-evening students are enrolled for 12 or more units.

3. Probation Student Identification Characteristics

The student record (admission form) was searched for common characteristics which might help the college identify the potential probation student.

The F81 and S82 groups were analyzed and it was found that about 55% of the 81/82 probation population did have some identifying characteristics; the remaining 45% had no consistent identifiers.

These identifiers for 55% of the population were major (undeclared), educational goal (self-interest), and objective (none).

Listed below are the responses of students attempting 12 or more units for purposes of academic probation.

	Number of Responses	Number on Probation	Percentage
Major-undeclared	1040	426	41%
Goal-self-interest	373	203	54%
Objective-none	910	392	43%
Any 2 of the above	536	277	52%

The best identifier is the self-interest goal with 54% of the student respondents on probation. The second best identifier is any two of the three responses, with 52% of the respondents placed on probation.

4. Conclusion

It is argued, conservatively, that the college lost 127 students within two semesters because they were placed on progress probation. If, in the opinion of the college's policy makers, it is desirable to institute some type of "probation prevention plan", the data suggest that about one-half the potential probation students may be identified before they are placed on probation.

APPENDIX I

In order to find the student retention from fall 81 to spring 82, and spring 82 to fall 82, the student population was divided into three categories; day only (D), day and evening (B) and evening (E). Then, the population migration was traced. Listed below is the raw data.

a) Total Registrations

F81	D	3525	S82	D	3247	F82	D	3162
F81	B	2258	S82	B	1972	F82	B	1853
F81	E	7694	S82	E	6859	F82	E	4098
F81		13477	S82		12078	F82		9113

The F81 and S82 figures are for the whole semester, the F82 figure is as of October 10, 1982.

b) New Registrations

Within each of the categories above, there are a number of new registrations, that is, students who have not previously registered at Shasta College or who have previously registered prior to fall 81 and who did not attend any classes fall 81.

S82	D	927	F82	D	1265
S82	B	482	F82	B	680
S82	E	4169	F82	E	2132
S82		5578	F82		4077

c) Three Semester Registrants

Listed below are those students who have registered three consecutive semesters and remained in the same category.

Day	F81 - S82 - F82	1278
Both	F81 - S82 - F82	807
Eve	F81 - S82 - F82	937

d) Two Semester Registrations

Listed below are the registration and dispersal figures for two semester intervals from F81 through F82. They allow us to look at the flow of students from one semester and category to another semester and category.

1. Fall, 1981 Day Dispersal

F81 D	S82	D	1536	(44%)
	S82	B	568	(16%)
(3525)	S82	E	157	(4%)
	F82	D	77	
	F82	B	32	(4%)
	F82	E	43	
	S82/F82		2413	(68%)

These figures trace the path of 3523 F81D students. 1536 (44%) became S82D students, 568 (16%) became S82B, and 157 (4%) registered for S82E classes. Also, 77 of them skipped the spring semester entirely and registered for F82D classes, 32 registered for F82B classes and 43 registered for only evening classes. 68% returned for at least one semester, either spring or fall, 1982.

2. Fall, 1981 Both Dispersal

F81 B	S82	D	628	(28%)
	S82	B	707	(31%)
(2258)	S82	E	205	(9%)
	F82	D	34	
	F82	B	30	(5%)
	F82	E	51	
	S82/F82		1655	(73%)

3. Fall, 1981 Evening Dispersal

F82 E	S82	D	156	(2%)
(7694)	S82	B	215	(3%)
	S82	E	2328	(30%)
	F82	D	91	
	F82	B	63	(6%)
	F82	E	347	
	S82/F82		3200	(41%)

It is of interest to note that only 35% of the F81E registrants took classes in S82, which indicates a high turnover among the evening students.

4. Spring, 1982 Day Dispersal

S82 D	F82	D	1101	(33%)
	F82	B	395	(13%)
(3247)	F82	E	114	(4%)
	F82		1610	(50%)

5. Spring, 1982 Both Dispersal

S82 B	F82	D	385	(20%)
	F82	B	478	(24%)
(1972)	F82	E	159	(7%)
	Total F82		1022	(51%)

6. Spring, 1982 Evening Dispersal

S82 E	F82	D	209	(3%)
	F82	B	175	(3%)
(6859)	F82	E	1252	(18%)
	Total F82		1636	(24%)

e) Discussion

The figures above allow us to determine the semester-to-semester attrition or retention rates for the general student population. The purpose of determining these rates is to compare them with the corresponding rates of probation students to ascertain the net effects of our probation policy. To reduce the problem to manageable proportions, we will combine the day-only (D) and day-evening (B) registrants to a new category, denoted (DB). The reasoning for the combination is the day-only (D) student and the day-evening student (B) are almost identical in their student profiles. Furthermore, most of the students eligible for probation come from this category. The remaining category is the evening only student (E) which is unlike the DB student in most every respect--average age, number of units taken, GPA, etc.

There are two principal questions which must be answered. What is the fall-to-spring retention, and what is the spring-to-fall retention?

1. Fall, 1981-Spring, 1982 Retention

a. DB Registrants - The figures below show the initial number of F81DB students and those who returned in the spring.

	S82D	S82B	S82E	
F81 D 3525	1536 +	568 +	157	= 2261
F81 B 2258	628 +	707 +	205	= 1540
F81DB 5783	S82DB			3801

Of 5783 F81DB registrants, 3801 returned in the spring. This amounts to 66% retention from fall-to-spring. At first glance, the 66% retention may seem to be low, since most of the day staff is involved with two semester-sequence courses and hence sees the same student clientele both semesters. The fact is that the day staff sees, on the average, only those students enrolled for about 12 or more units; approximately half of the 5783 DB students who are enrolled for 12 or more units each semester. The remaining students are taking less than a full load and a high turnover of those students taking only one or two courses per semester can account for the 66% retention.

b. E Registrants - The figures below show the fall to spring retention of evening students.

	S82D	S82B	S82E	
F81 E 7694	156 +	215 +	2328	= 2699

2699 fall, 1981 evening students returned for classes in spring, 1982, which yields a retention of 35%, hence there is a 65% turnover in evening students.

2. Spring, 1982 to Fall, 1982 Retention

a. DB Registrants

	F82D	F82B	F82E	
S82 D 3247	1101 +	395 +	114	= 1610
S82 B 1972	385 +	478 +	159	= 1023
S82DB 5219	F82			2632

The retention of S82DB to F82 is 50% (2632/5219 = .50).

b. E Registrants

	F82D	F82B	F82E	
S82 E 6859	209	+ 175	+ 1252	= 1636

The retention of S82E students to F82 is 24%
(1636/6859 =.24)

f) Category Composition

While the figures are at hand, it is interesting to look at the composition of the two categories for S82 and F82. Within the limits of the data, the category composition can be subdivided into these parts: (i) new registrants, (ii) registrants attending the previous semester and (iii) registrants who did not attend the previous semester.

1. Spring, 1982 DB Registrants

(i) new*	927(S82D)	+ 482(S82B)	= 1409	(27%)
(ii) F81	1536(F81D)	+ 568(F81D)	= 2104	(40%)
	628	+ 707(F81B)	= 1335	(26%)
	156	+ 215(F81E)	= 371	(7%)
(iii) Previous semesters - no data				
			5219	(100%)

*Since the records only go back to F81, the 1409 students in the "new" classification constitute students indeed new to the college, plus any returning students who did not attend the F81 semester. The figures show that 73% of the S83DE students were also registered for F81.

2. Spring, 1982 E Registrants

(i) new*	4169		(61%)
(ii) F81	157(F81D)		(2%)
	205(F81B)		(3%)
	2328(F81E)		(34%)
Total	6859		(100%)

61% of the S82E students are either new to the college or returning and did not register F81. Also, 39% of the S82E students were registered for F81.

APPENDIX II

Probation Student Statistics - F81, S82, F81

Listed below is a statistical summary of the students placed on probation last year. The breakdown is by both probation types. It should also be noted that the figures cited below were correct at one time, but may have changed due to either appeals, or late grade changes in various cases. This fluctuation is tolerated because our interest here is in trends and approximate percentages to assess the overall effects of probation policy.

1. Fall, 1981	Progress	Academic
Placed on probation	382	200
Registered, S82	173 (45%)	172 (86%)
# attending classes after 2nd S82 census	103 (27%)	82 (41%)
# off probation F82	68 (18%)	26 (13%)
# eligible to continue on probation F82	35 (9%)	56 (28%)

2. Spring, 1982	Progress	Academic
Placed on probation	474	213
Registered, F82	194 (40%)	164 (77%)

3. Fall, 1982 DB Registrants

(i)	new*	1265	(F82D) +	680	(F82B) =	1945 (39%)
(ii)	S82D	1101	+	395	=	1496
	S82B	385	+	478	=	863 (55%)
	S82E	209	+	175	=	384
(iii)	F81D	77	+	32	=	109 (7%)
	F81B	34	+	30	=	64
	F81E					156
	Total					5017

We observe that 39% of the F82DB students are new to the college, or are returning and took no F81 or S82 classes. 55% are continuing from the spring and 7% are returning from F81.

4. Fall, 1982 E Registrants

(i)	new	2132	(52%)
(ii)	S82D	114	
	S82E	159	(37%)
	S82E	1252	
(iii)	F81D	43	
	F81B	51	(11%)
	F81E	347	
	Total	4098	

We observe that 52% of the F82E students are new*; 37% are continuing from spring semester and 11% are returning from F81.

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